



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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New Year's commissary savings No. 1 resolution: Clip coupons!

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FORT LEE, Va. – Shopping regularly at the commissary can save you an average of more than 30 percent on your grocery bill, but savvy shoppers can save even more through coupon clipping and redemption.

Commissary shoppers in commissaries worldwide saved an incredible \$109 million on their grocery bills through the redemption of more than 151 million coupons in fiscal year 2004. Shoppers at Fort Belvoir, Va., redeemed the most coupons in FY04 saving more than \$2.4 million. Other locations in the top 10 were: Lackland Air Force Base, Texas; Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.; Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.; Fort Meade, Md.; Naval Base San Diego, Calif.; Marine Corps Combat Development Command Quantico, Va.; and Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va.

“We expect to save about \$400 in coupons in the commissary this year, increasing our average savings per visit by 5 percent to 10 percent,” said one loyal commissary shopper at Fort Campbell, Ky. “I plan my list in advance and then go through the organized coupon holder and mark the items on the list that are on sale. I also watch the sales promotions on the commissary Web site.”

According to a 2003 report by NCH Marketing Services, which specializes in coupon processing and promotion information management, military commissaries are among the top five retailers redeeming grocery coupons. In addition, there are many coupons targeted exclusively to military shoppers – appearing in installation newspapers, special “military only” mailings, hand-delivered at commissaries or from tear pads on commissary shelves.

To increase opportunities for coupon lovers, DeCA accepts Internet coupons as long as

they have a bar code for scanning purposes, and the coupons are not for free product. Since the announcement, links on <http://www.commissaries.com> to sites such as <http://www.coolsavings.com> and <http://www.eclip.com> have become popular with commissary “coupon clippers.”

Savvy coupon clippers develop a system for cutting, saving and organizing coupons to maximize savings. Some insider tips include:

- Make a list prior to shopping and mark the items you have coupons for. Plan ahead to avoid impulse buys, saving additional money.
- If you have several coupons for the same product, use them in the order of their expiration dates or if the product is on sale, use them all at once to buy larger quantities.
- Organize your coupons according to the layout of the commissary – many commissaries have aisle plans on their store pages at <http://www.commissaries.com>.
- Since coupons are good in overseas commissaries up to six months after their expiration date, send your expired coupons to friends and families overseas. A great address list for overseas organizations that accept coupons can be found at http://www.siteforsavings.com/content_mas/hlphand.htm.
- Swap coupons with friends and family or form a coupon club. Everyone finds coupons they won't use, but certainly someone else will. Some commissaries have a bin at the front of the store for depositing unused coupons.

Many people believe that coupon cutting is a chore, but it doesn't have to be. Get your kids involved. Pay them a percentage of your coupon savings for clipping and organizing coupons. It helps them to learn the value of saving and smart shopping. As an incentive, put the money you save using coupons in a separate account for something special. Some families find they save enough money for an annual vacation or donate the proceeds to a charity food locker. Like any good investment, keeping a special account allows you to see a real return for your time and effort.

When looking to stretch your commissary savings with coupons, consider these tips:

- **Don't** use coupons to buy products you don't use or need for this will only hurt your budget. Do use them to try new products.
- **Do** take a calculator along to the commissary to do comparison shopping using unit prices listed on the shelf label. And be sure to subtract the coupon value from the price before figuring the unit cost.
- **Don't** forget about those last-minute coupons. Most commissaries offer various

publications with valuable coupons in them near the entry or front of the store.

- **Do** present all coupons to the cashier before he or she begins to ring up your merchandise. To speed up the process, group all products that you have coupons for together. That way if a coupon does not scan correctly the cashier may more easily find the product and compare it to the coupon.

- **Do** use coupons even if you are using self-checkout. The system will automatically match the coupon to the correct product purchased.

The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of nearly 275 commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of 30 percent or more on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$2,700 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.

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